

# Employer Phone Forum

## Getting to Know the Members Only Toolkit October 28, 2004

*Available exclusively to Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>, phone forums provide cutting-edge information on a range of topics related to commuter benefits. Moderated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), these forums feature experts on key topic areas.*

On October 28, 2004, Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> hosted a phone forum to reintroduce the Best Workplaces for Commuters Members Only Toolkit. The toolkit contains valuable marketing resources for employers who want to get the most out of their commuter benefits program. Patrice Thornton, Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> National Director, Customer Service, led the discussion.

### The Toolkit

The Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> Members Only Toolkit can be accessed from the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> Web site at [www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov). Click on the “Members Only Toolkit” link found in the lower right corner of the homepage. The toolkit is protected by a password and is available exclusively to employers who have qualified for the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> list. If you are on the list and have forgotten the password, please contact your account representative or contact us at [bwc@epa.gov](mailto:bwc@epa.gov).

The toolkit is divided into three sections. In the “Promote Program Internally” section, you can learn how to market commuter benefits to employees and increase their participation in your commuter program. In the “Promote Program Externally” section, you will find a variety of sample media materials that you can use to announce your certification as one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup>. In the “Promoting Innovative Commuter Benefits” section, you can find out about the cutting-edge benefits some Best

Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> are providing their employees and how you can kick-start your commuter program with unique and exciting offerings.

### Promote Program Internally

The key to a thriving commuter benefits program is proper internal promotion. Using the strategies presented in this section of the Members Only Toolkit will help improve employee participation.

The first and most valuable resource offered to employers to promote their programs is the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> logo. We encourage you to use the logo on your organization’s website, in newsletter articles, in press releases, and anywhere else you want to be recognized for your commitment and leadership in offering commuter benefits. In the toolkit you can find the logo in several different formats as well as instructions on how to include it on your website. To ensure that you use the logo appropriately, read the Graphics Standards and Usage Guide, also available in the toolkit.

You will find a host of other valuable resources in the “Promote Program Internally” section of the toolkit, including a fact sheet entitled “Ten Tips for a Successful Commute Event.” One way to stir up interest in your commuter benefits program is to hold a commute event, and this flyer provides guidance to make the event the most effective it can be.

Also included in the section are a number of sample materials, including samples of Web pages, e-mails to employees, Web announcements, and newsletter articles. You can tailor all of these with information to promote your own commuter benefits program. You can also see examples from participating employers that have already designed internal marketing materials and are actively promoting their programs.

## Promote Program Externally

Employers on the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> list are committed to improving employees' commutes, cutting traffic congestion, and helping the environment. Your organization is doing something it can be proud of for your employees and your community, and this section of the toolkit can help you get the recognition you deserve for your efforts.

In this section, you will find a number of sample external media materials, including a press release, a fully-written newspaper article, and a "fast facts" sheet to accompany any materials you send to media outlets. Also included in this section is a document entitled "Action Steps & Tips for Communications," a guide that will help you through the most difficult part of media relations—actually getting your release published. While there are never any guarantees when it comes to placing articles in news outlets, this guide will help improve your chances.

You can see what sort of media attention Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> has received by clicking on "Link to BWC Media Page." As you can see, a number of national newspapers have found Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> to be very newsworthy!

## Promoting Innovative Commuter Benefits

Innovative commuter benefit offerings catch the eyes of employees. Bicycle subsidy programs, teleworking support, membership in carsharing programs, and other distinctive benefits can increase the visibility, and in turn, the number, of employees using commuting options other than driving alone. Promotional events, such as employee commuting contests, "Walk to Work Weeks," and Wellness Fairs are good ways to get your employees talking about leaving their cars at home.

The "Promoting Innovative Commuter Benefits" section of the toolkit provides in-depth information about many of the different creative benefits and promotional events that an organization can offer to its employees. Of particular value is the "Step by Step Guide to Implementing an Employee Commuting Awards Program," a complete guide to coordinating an awards program that is fun, memorable, and effective in raising employee awareness of available commuting options.

You can find sample offerings for commuter weeks, including the City of Aspen's "Find Another Way Week" schedule. Also included is a calendar of national and regional commuter events. Try increasing employee awareness of your event by piggy-backing on the media attention received by a regional or national effort.

## Something for Everyone

The Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> Members Only Toolkit has something to offer every employer on the list. Whether it's the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> logo, a sample press release that can be tailored and sent to a local media outlet, or an idea for an innovative benefit, the toolkit is a valuable resource for Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> employers. The Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> team is always looking for ways to make it even more useful. If you would like to see us add a topic or additional sample materials, please talk to your account manager or e-mail us at <bwc@epa.com> with your ideas.

## Open Discussion

Meredith Schuft, from the Campus Area Transportation Management Authority in Vermont wanted to know how to use the Best Workplaces for Commuters logo in a newsletter that is printed in only two colors. She was advised to consult the Logo Use Guidelines, available in the toolkit. It will answer all questions that one might have about logo use and provides options for simplified color schemes.

Karen Kress, from Tampa Downtown Partnership in Florida, suggested that “alternative” commuting has a negative connotation. She recommended the usage of “commute options” instead.

Sharon Lewinson, from Nortel Networks in North Carolina, volunteered to provide additional samples of promotional materials for her commuter benefits program.

Barbara Disser, from Boeing Company in Arizona, mailed out a press release locally about her organization’s Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> from the Fortune 500 Companies designation. As a result, she received an offer to be a guest speaker to speak about commuter benefits in her community.

Marlene Anderson, from SRP in Arizona, also was contacted for a follow-up article after the Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> Fortune 500 list release. She was very pleased with the free publicity her organization received.

Several good ideas for innovative commuter benefits came out of the discussions, including:

- Giving employees days off for using commuter options.
- Having a dress-down day on the same day as bike-to-work or walk-to-work day.
- Sharing the cost of bike lockers with employees, giving the employees a sense of ownership and increasing their participation.

## Conclusion

Ms. Thornton closed by thanking the employers for participating in the forum. She indicated that a summary of this forum will be posted at <[www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov)>. If employers have topic ideas for future phone forums, they are encouraged to submit them to EPA by e-mailing <[bwc@epa.gov](mailto:bwc@epa.gov)> or by telling their account manager. If you have questions for Ms. Thornton, she can be reached at <[Thornton.Patrice@epa.gov](mailto:Thornton.Patrice@epa.gov)> or (734) 214-4329.